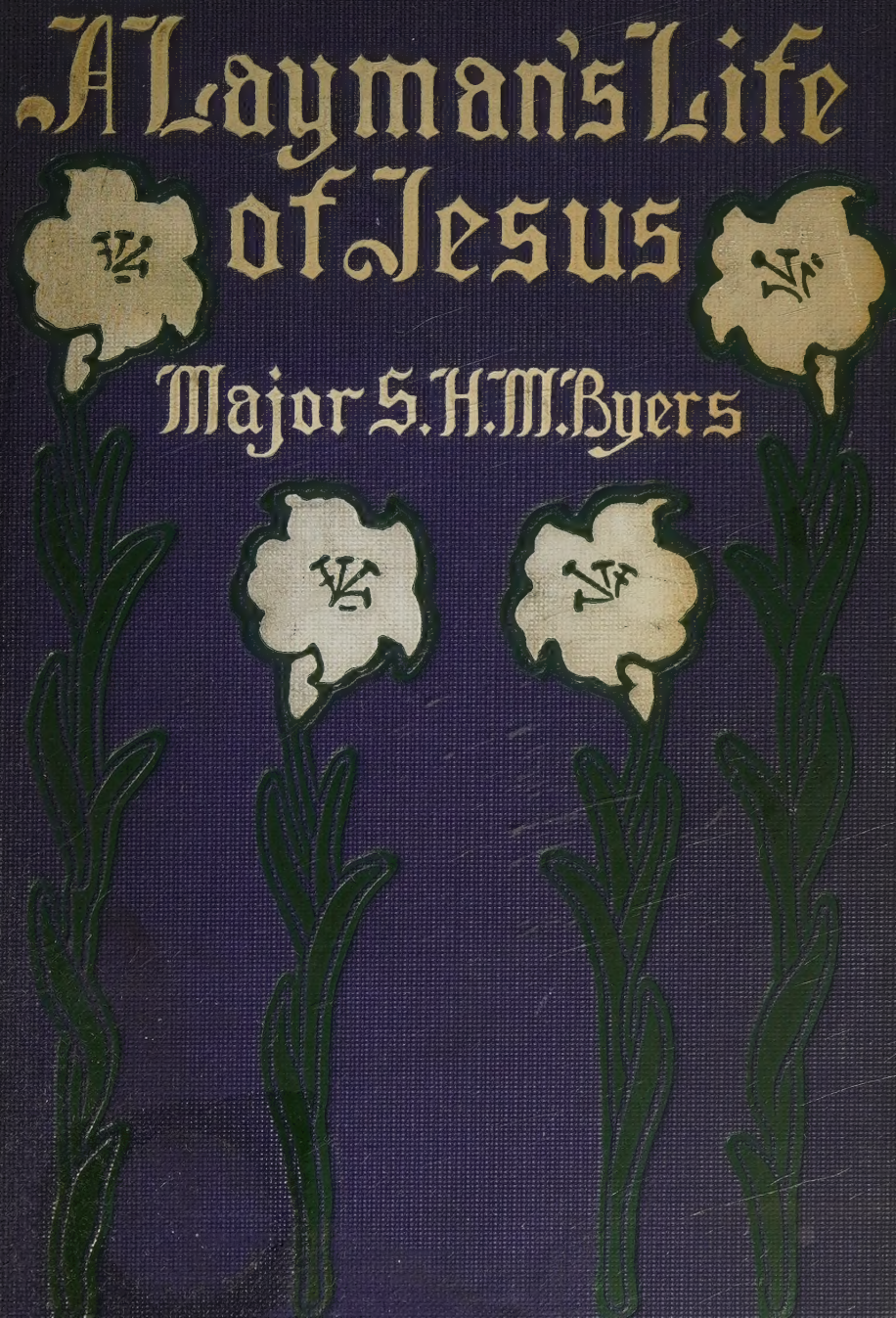
A Layman's Life of Jesus

Major S. H. M. Byers



Class 232.9R Book B9917
General Theological Seminary Library
CHELSEA SQUARE, NEW YORK.

PRESENTED BY
Hiram R. Bennett, Q.J.S. 1913.

A LAYMAN'S LIFE OF JESUS

A LAYMAN'S LIFE OF JESUS

BY

MAJOR S. H. M. BYERS

OF GENERAL SHERMAN'S STAFF

Author of "With Fire and Sword," "Sherman's March to the Sea," "Iowa in War Times," "Twenty Years in Europe," and of other books

NEW YORK
THE NEALE PUBLISHING COMPANY
1912

COPYRIGHT, 1912, BY
THE NEALE PUBLISHING COMPANY
NEW YORK

232.9 K
B99 17

55510

Copyright, 1912, by
THE NEALE PUBLISHING COMPANY

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
LIBRARY
NEW YORK

PREFACE

Every book should have a purpose. The object of this little volume is to try and harmonize, in a sense, and bring nearer to us, the story of the Master. It is free from the fog of creed, and the simple picture of the Times and the Man may help to waken new interest, especially with the young in the greatest tale of the world.

H. S. M. B.

Des Moines, Sept. 3, 1912.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/laymanslifeofjes0000majo

CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER I 7

Palestine two thousand years ago. The Little Land of Galilee. An Oriental Village. The Boy Carpenter.

CHAPTER II 12

A Boy of Babylon. The Founder of Judaism. Philo, the Philosopher. An out-door Man. The Poet-Carpenter. Staying in the Desert. The Silence of History. Where was Jesus in these silent years?

CHAPTER III 23

Christ still a Jew. Is the Child's escape at Bethlehem still a secret? Performing wonders. A strange age. Rome still in the thrall of Heathendom. Augustus dead. Tiberius the Awful. Palestine itself half Heathen. A Religious Enthusiast. Jesus is ceasing to be a Jew. A church tyranny. Subjects of Cæsar. Human suffering counted for nothing with the Romans. The Jews are longing for the New Time when God might come and rule the world in Pity. An age of Superstitions and Magic. Laws of Science unknown. Nobody even knew that the world was round.

CHAPTER IV 41

The Fairy Prince. His Home is everywhere. John the Baptist is preaching down by Jericho. The young Jesus hears of him and goes a hundred miles on foot to see him. A stranger steps down to the River to be baptized. Look quick, it is the Lamb of God! John is put to death in a palace by the Dead Sea. A Woman's Revenge.

CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER V 55

An Oriental Wedding, and the first miracle. Jairus. "Little Maid, Arise." The Light of the World. The Poet of the Lord. Do we know what a Miracle is?

CHAPTER VI 67

A wandering Teacher. Lives in a borrowed house at Capernaum. The Testament Books, fragments written from memory. The whole Law of Life boiled down to Seven Words. He visits Tyre by the Ocean. Walking on the Sea. A hard saying, and not understood. His friends begin to leave Him. They demand Wonders, Miracles. Raffael's great picture.

CHAPTER VII 82

Jesus goes alone and on foot to Jerusalem, to try and prove Himself. In six months they will kill Him. The rich Capital no place for Socialism. "If thou be Christ, tell us, plainly." He is a fugitive from a city mob. The Raising of Lazarus. Again the people are following Him. The great Sanhedrin is alarmed. "This Man has everybody believing on Him. He will create a Revolution yet." Jerusalem is in political danger, anyway; so is the Roman Empire. Everything seems going to pieces. "This Man has too many Followers; we must kill Him." Judas is hired to betray Him.

CHAPTER VIII 94

The last supper. Leonardo's great picture. Betrayal. With a rope around his neck the Savior of mankind is dragged before a Roman Judge. The scene at Pilate's palace. Pilate's wife warns him. The awful murder and the End.

A Layman's Life of Jesus

CHAPTER I

Palestine two thousand years ago. The Little Land of Galilee. An Oriental Village. The Boy Carpenter.

One of the beauty spots of the world, a couple of thousand years ago, was the little land of Galilee, in upper Palestine. That was a land for poets and painters.

Lonesome, deserted, and little inhabited as it seems now, there was a time when this little paradise of earth had many people and many handsome cities. "In my time," says Josephus, " there were not less than four hundred walled towns in Galilee." Nature, too, was lavish in its gifts to this little land. There were green valleys there, picturesque mountains, clear blue lakes, running brooks, and grassy fields. An Eastern sun shone on the province almost all the time. There was no winter there. Like a diamond in the very heart of this beautiful land sat the town

of Nazareth, "The Flower of Galilee." Close by the village were the hills that fenced in the upper end of the plain of beautiful Esdralon. Figs grew there at Nazareth, and oranges, and grapes luscious and bountiful as nowhere else. The flower-lined lanes stretched from the village clear down to the blue lake of Galilee, only a dozen miles or so away. It must have been a delight to live in a climate so delicious, in a land so lovely.

It all belonged to Rome then, as did the whole country known as Palestine. The Romans had divided the land into three provinces,—Galilee, Samaria, and Judea, with its splendid city of Jerusalem, then one of the noted capitals of the world. Governors or kings were appointed for these three provinces by the emperors at Rome; they were usually Orientals.

Just now two sons of Herod the Great, oftener known as "the splendid Arab," are ruling there. The one named Herod is at Jerusalem; his brother Antipater, or Herod Antipas, is governing little Galilee in the north end of Palestine. Like many

another Oriental king he is an idle, luxurious, dissipated, and corrupt ruler.

There is yet another brother of these two kings. His name is Philip, and he lives in Rome. He has a very beautiful wife, who some day is to bring great trouble on the world, for Antipater will yet desert his Galilean queen and marry this Roman beauty.

It is all in the time of the great Augustus that we are talking of now. In Rome it is called the Golden Age. It is not quite that in Palestine. Yet the world's greatest era is just beginning there. In how small a territory the world's greatest deeds are about to be enacted! Palestine, taken all together, did not make much of a country in area; many of the states in the American union have more square miles, but all the nations in the world combined have no such history. Palestine is a strip of territory reaching along the Mediterranean for one hundred and fifty miles on one side, and along the Arabian desert on the other. It is hardly over sixty miles across. It is topographically of the

most diversified character. It has some beautiful valleys and purling streams; it has mountains, too, lofty and desolate, and its principal lakes are almost a thousand feet below the level of the sea. The whole land is cut in two lengthwise by the Jordan river, the most peculiar, the most rapid, and the most historic river on the face of the earth.

We are now in Galilee. In the midst of the wonderful beauty of the scene at Nazareth any one would be attracted by the appearance of a youth there who is just out of school. This Nazareth, though not His birthplace, is His home; here all His brothers and sisters and cousins live. In a village close by His mother Mary was born. The boy's own birth was at a country inn up near Jerusalem, at a time when His parents had gone there to pay taxes, and be counted as citizens of the Roman empire.

The lovely little village where this youth is, happy among His kith and kin, is not unlike many an Oriental village of to-day. Strange little stone-paved streets run into

the open square where the fountain of the village is. And this is the fountain where, on summer evenings, the village girls, among them the beautiful Mary herself, came for water. The little square, and the streets, and possibly some of the old houses, and the ruins of the fountain are there yet, in this 1912, and clustering vines and roses are still there—and so too are the clear skies, the starlit nights, the purple hills, and the dark-eyed women, just as in the long ago.

CHAPTER II

A Boy of Babylon. The Founder of Judaism. Philo, the Philosopher. An out-door Man. The Poet-Carpenter. Staying in the Desert. The Silence of History. Where was Jesus in these silent years?

Let us go back to that long ago for a little while. At the foot of one of the little streets, close by the square and the fountain, stands a simple shop for carpenters. At the door, ax and saw in hand, we see again that Galilean youth. He is a carpenter's apprentice now, and is working with Joseph, His father. He is tall and beautiful, His eyes are blue, and very mild—His hair is yellow. He is wearing the working-man's costume common to Galileans of His age. He is perhaps twenty—handsome in countenance, and kindly beyond expression. He has long since finished with the little village school, where the tasks consisted only in chanting verses from the Scriptures with the other boys and girls of the village. But as He was apt, He has learned the

Scriptures well. He knows them by heart almost; and later at the synagogue He heard the priests read from the Great Hillel, the Babylonian, who is writing and saying things about life, religion, and the Scriptures that are shaking the religious world. Philo, also, He almost knows by heart. He also knows the Psalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon, as well as the aphorisms and maxims, the dreams and stories of great men who were writing in Palestine just before He was born. It was a day of maxims in literature. Men wrote short, strong, simple sentences, full of thought. Their sayings were easy to remember. Indeed, even to-day, there is no book so easy to commit to memory as the Bible.

The young carpenter stored them all in a retentive mind. Some day He would have use for them. At times the youth stops His work and talks with His father Joseph about the magnificent temple that Herod is just completing up there at Jerusalem. He has seen it often as a boy, and He tells of the strange questions the

priests there once asked Him, and how easily He answered every one. He is talking in the peculiar Arimean dialect, a speech ridiculed in great Jerusalem, as everywhere else, outside His Galilee. Occasionally, too, He is relating to His father the beautiful aphorisms from the gentle Hillel.

And who is this wonderful Hillel of whom Testament writers and teachers say almost nothing at all? Few of the young ever heard of him. We must ask, for some have even called him another Jesus, he was so good and great. He was a very princely Jew, this Hillel, this lover of mankind, this gentle and humane reformer, whose life benefited the whole age in which he lived. As a poor Babylonian youth, he went over to Jerusalem to study under the great rabbis of the church. He soon became very distinguished, and through him Jewish life and religion were reformed. He is often called the founder of Judaism as taught in the Talmud. Herod made him president of the great Sanhedrin, with the title of prince, and the honor de-

scended in his family. His aphorisms, his maxims, his wise sayings were known to every Jew in Palestine, and affected all Jewish life. One of his sayings was: "Do not unto others what thou wouldst not have done unto thyself. This is the whole law; the rest go and finish." Another: "Do not believe in thyself till the day of thy death." Again: "If I do not care for my soul, who will do it for me?" Still one: "Say not I will repent at leisure. Leisure may never come." And another: "Whosoever is ambitious of aggrandizing his name will destroy it." Beyond a doubt, many of the sayings of this great and gentle teacher were as familiar to the young carpenter working at His bench in little Nazareth as the Galilean's own sayings are to the youth of today.

Hillel was thirty years older than Christ, and survived Him ten years. Many of the heart-sayings of the Master can be traced to Hillel, to Philo, the Egyptian, or to Moses. Let us not forget that He was human—divinely so—and that

His mind, like that of any other human being, was susceptible to the teachings, the sayings, the surroundings that were nearest. He not only absorbed all, He refined all.

Philo was another of the great philosophers whose works helped to influence the young Galilean. He, though a Jew, lived all his life in Egypt. There he wrote maxims worthy of the Master himself. He was twenty years older than the Galilean. He had studied Plato, and spent his life in trying to harmonize religious Greek thought with the thoughts of Moses, the lawgiver of the Jews.

We will hear little in our Testament writers of these two wise men, who must have had a tremendous influence on the youth at Nazareth. Indeed, as already said, the Testament anyway tells us not much of the life at Galilee, or elsewhere. The larger part of the Testament story relates to the deeds of the passion week, or the last days of the Master's life. One-third of the book is taken up with that single week. It has been guessed that had

the details of the Galilean's whole life been written out fully, it would have made a book eighty times as big as our Bible.

The things that the Galileans heard in the village synagogue, the things that He read in the old Scriptures, all, all that found its way to the village from Hillel, from Philo, and other men renowned then, and forgotten now, were reflected in Him. More, He beautified all, simplified all, glorified all. Most of all, however, His divine instinct enlarged itself from scenes in nature. The young carpenter was a poet. No beauty of the fields, the hills, the brooks, the lovely lake escaped His eye, or failed to feed His soul. He was an outdoor man. Scarcely one of His miracles later, but would be performed out of doors. The wedding at Cana was probably on the green lawn of a peasant's home. The stilling of the tempest, the feeding of the five thousand, the transfiguration, the numberless wonders and cures in all the Galilean villages were nearly always performed out of doors. Half His

parables have to do with things out of doors. To Him God was in everything—the rocks, the trees, the blue sky of Galilee, the very desolation of the Dead sea inspired Him. How often the Testament tells of His flying away from crowds to be alone with nature. Is it not altogether possible, almost certain, that these long absences were in the wilderness of the desert? His long stay in solitary places, later, communing with God at first hand, may they not account for so much of the silence of history as to much of His life? It need not seem strange to us at all. In the old Jewish days half a lifetime of contemplation in the solitude of the desert was regarded by every one a first step to leadership.

Whoever sought a high religious calling, or sought to be a founder of a new belief, went through this solitary preparation in the desert. Even Moses did it, and spent forty years as a shepherd on the plains. John did it, Jerome did it, Mahomet did it. Why not Jesus? Even great teachers of modern times locked themselves up

in the desert of cloister cells for years. Savonarola did it—Martin Luther did it —Assisi did it—so did a thousand other luminaries of the religious world.

Certainly most of the Galilean's life is a blank to human history, otherwise not explained. Why should He not have been absent in some desert solitude, some wilderness, preparing for immortal deeds, immortal words? There is absolutely no other explanation for these silent years.

How little the youth at this moment is dreaming of all that future as He works by His father's side, or goes about the village encouraging and helping by His gentle smile! He is healing by His strong faith and His pure soul. The poor love Him, not yet knowing who He is. He himself does not know. We even wonder if He knows how it is that He helps so many. He is no magician, no doer of wonders just to make a show. Perhaps He only knows as yet that goodness and kindness and love and extreme faith can do everything. Anyway He is the loved of every one. How easy it all is to be

loved. One can be just a carpenter, and yet by love do everything. Of all things He is a helper of the poor, the unfortunate. Sometimes the very ignorant adopt the notion that salvation is for the poor only. They, too, misunderstand and exaggerate. A little later a sect of the overzealous poor build a church on the theory that the poor only, go to Heaven. They call themselves "Ebionites," or "The Poor." Of course, these sects in a few years ended in religious suicide. They had forgotten that the Galilean could be no respecter of class or persons.

To-morrow this young carpenter, this village doctor, will again disappear in the wilderness of the desert; who knows how long? Old church writings say that He was seven years in the desert of Egypt as a child. He is used to solitude. Legends tell, too, that He studied law in these days —by law they meant the books of Moses and the prophets. Likely enough He took the parchment rolls with Him, and in the long days there in the desert learned them all by heart. Later He will tell all the

people to go and read the same great Scriptures.

What His life may have been at such times in the desert we can more than guess. It was a meditation, an inspiration. It is told of John the Baptist, whose coming birth like that of Christ was announced by an angel, that he also spent years as a hermit of the desert, and in its solitude learned a language and received a revelation not vouchsafed to ordinary man. What then must the great soul of the Galilean not have absorbed there alone with the voice of the great creation speaking to Him all the day—the night there with the "floor of Heaven inlaid with patines of bright gold, and the music of the spheres sounding in his ears forever." His was a soul to enjoy and to be inspired with such a scene.

Little as the sacred writings tell of Him, silent as history is in the Galilean days, we have other glimpses of the times, and of what He was doing, by reading the old books, now called Apocryphal, that were discarded from our present Testament in

the fourth century. Why all of them were discarded, is hard to imagine; for, though buried in an ocean of nonsense and legend, there was still at the bottom of them a grain of pure gold. Besides, for over three centuries these discarded books were regarded as part of the sacred writings.

CHAPTER III

Christ still a Jew. Is the Child's escape at Bethlehem still a secret? Performing wonders. A strange age. Rome still in the thrall of Heathendom. Augustus dead. Tiberius the Awful. Palestine itself half Heathen. A Religious Enthusiast. Jesus is ceasing to be a Jew. A church tyranny. Subjects of Caesar. Human suffering counted for nothing with the Romans. The Jews are longing for the New Time when God might come and rule the world in Pity. An age of Superstitions and Magic. Laws of Science unknown. Nobody even knew that the world was round.

But let us go back there to Galilee and stay yet a while with the village carpenter. The youth is older now. Perhaps He is going back and forth between Galilee and the solitude of the wilderness. This so-called "wilderness" is nothing more than the secret hills beyond the Jordan, or the mysterious edge of the near-by desert coming up to them like a speechless sea. At this moment He is again in Nazareth, and the wondering villagers again see Him at His daily toil. He is still learning by rote the striking maxims and

proverbs of the Jewish masters. He is yet a Jew. Like all Israel He is counting on the completion of prophecy; a new world is sure to come soon—and with it a king from Heaven. It will be a glorious thing, that new world, that great king. The villagers familiarly call Him Jesus—but they know nothing of the beautiful tradition of His birth—how an angel had announced it to Mary, and how His name was fixed in Heaven.

No—Mary had meditated much on the angel's visit and on what the angel had said to her, but steadily she had kept the great secret in her own heart. She had not even whispered to the villagers about the shepherds and the star at Bethlehem, nor the sudden flight of herself and the child to far-off Egypt. Why, her secrecy is just now hard to guess. Is it possible that Herod or his successor, who would have slain the child, is still watching for Him—not knowing even of the return from Egypt years ago? Even now one indiscreet word from her might cause His death. We wonder if now, on this day,

there in His father's workshop, the youth dreams that some day He is to be a king, and that of his kingdom there will be no end? I think not. He is not publicly preaching now. That, Luke says, will come much later. But what delightful whisperings go about Galilee concerning Him already. Possibly these beautiful heart-stories about Himself were as familiar to the young carpenter then as they now are to every reader of the sacred book. He may have known of them, thought of them, but He, too, kept them largely to Himself. It was an age of prophecies, of dreams, of visions, of fables, and of superstitious tales. Perhaps He was waiting to see if the angel's words to Mary were to be fulfilled. Two thousand years have not dimmed the beauty of the wondrous tale told of Mary and the child. If parts of it were only the longings of a few persons' imaginations, we may never clearly know, nor is it of the least importance that we should know. The happenings at the birth of the world's great ones have little to

do with the grandeur of their lives.

Yes, the young carpenter, with the tender eyes and the radiant face, may have known of some of these wonderful sayings about Himself. Mary must have told Him some of them; and Joseph working at His side must have told Him how, on His account, the little children had been murdered at Bethlelem, and how narrow His own escape had been when he and Mary and the child had hurried away to Egypt. We can imagine the wonderful incidents told by Joseph of that strange flight into a foreign country. Our Testament barely mentions it. His birth is almost the only bit of history the Testament gives us of almost twenty-five years of the Galilean's life. They went to Egypt to escape the wrath of the tyrant Herod. Old writings tell us of two, even seven, years in Egypt, and of child-miracles in that far-away land. Of all this our accepted Testament tells us nothing. Hearing that the tyrant was long dead, Joseph and Mary and the child secretly returned to the old home in Galilee.

Are they living there in secret yet—and is the new king at Jerusalem wondering if they are alive—and does he too want the child's blood in case He was not killed that night at Bethlehem, and does he wonder what became of the wise men of the east who saw the child, but dared not go back to tell it? Does he wonder if they are somewhere in hiding yet? Does he dream that this youth in Galilee is possibly the child the shepherds told of that wonderful night? Just now we still see Him standing by the little carpenter shop, ax in hand, possibly thinking of what His father has told Him of His youth; or of what Mary hinted to Him of the bright Angel of the Annunciation? Who knows? We only guess at the secret, for history, sacred and profane, has left it all a blank. We only know that it was a feeling of the whole Jewish race that an aspirant to leadership must, first of all, retire to the desert and live for years in solitude, just as Elias had done. It has been said that a retreat to the desert was the condition of and the prelude to high destinies. The

Galilean knew all about these men, from Moses and Elias down to John, who found their inspiration on the desert, or in secret places. If He was not much in the desert in these unknown years, where then was He, that no one tells of Him? Was there indeed nothing for Matthew, nor Mark, nor Luke, nor John, nor Josephus, nor anybody else to write about Him? Was it all a blank these long years? If secrecy from Herod, or from his successor Archelaus, was needed—that would account for everything, even for the whole world's silence.

This retreat for meditation would not hinder that at far intervals He return a little to His home in Galilee, where we see Him now with that ineffable smile of kindness on His face and tenderness shining in His eyes. The peasants passing by are uplifted, moved by His tender compassionate look. They wonder why. They wonder too where He has been so long, and before they are done wondering He is gone. Sometimes He disappears so suddenly—it was just as if a spirit had come and gone.

Is He again in His hermit cave now beyond the Jordan? Sometimes when there at home, as now, He has quietly taught the villagers of truth; He has blessed the poor; He has healed the sick; He has performed wonders, and they know not how it is done. Some day He will tell them all.

It is a strange age He has been living in. Let us look at it for a little while. This Palestine boy had been just fourteen years old when the news came that the great Augustus at Rome was dead, and that the awful and licentious emperor Tiberius was governing the Roman empire. Just now the Galilean is twenty-six, and other news comes—that Tiberius has gone to the heavenly little island of Capri in the Mediterranean sea, and is there holding a court that shall shock the world. No wonder the youth begins to think, with all His people, that God must soon send somebody to put an end to the wickedness of kings. Antipater, the idle and licentious favorite at Rome, still rules over little Galilee as governor, or king. The Roman empire is still in the thrall of perfect

heathendom. There are half as many Gentiles as Jews in Palestine itself. All over the land beautiful monuments are erected by Rome to the heathen gods. The young Nazarene can walk across the hills to Sidon by the sea any day and hear the people chanting hymns to Jupiter and Apollo. As for Himself, He is still a Jew, like most of His countrymen; only now, like Philo and like Hillel, and like John and others, He is more than a Jew; He is passing out of the old doctrines of the Jewish church into the broad daylight of truth. He will yet help to do away with the Mosaic law. In a private way, yet unheard of outside of little Galilee, He himself is teaching that God is a spirit, and must be worshiped in spirit and not in form, and not in heathen idols, nor in the way they are doing it at Jerusalem. God had already become tired of the burnt offering of rams and of the blood of beasts. Isaiah had told them that, long ago. This Galilean will go on repeating it so long as He shall live. Like the great Hillel, He would teach common justice to man—love

for one another—charity to all. This was to be the great commandment.

We are not sure, but in a vague way this young Galilean already feels the mantle of a prophet falling about Him. He is saying nothing exactly new to His Galilean neighbors—but He is saying it in a new and gracious way, and they listen to Him as He converses in the shop, or on the street. He sees and feels God in the beautiful nature all about Him there in Galilee, yet more He feels God in himself.

Man holds in himself tremendous hidden powers. Science is rapidly unveiling them. They were being unveiled to a degree by the Greeks even in the time of this young carpenter; but the Jewish people neither believed in nor heeded a school that gave an explanation of things marvelous. They were set in their superstition. No book that described certain fixed laws of nature was, for one moment, to take the place of Moses and the prophets. Even the Galilean himself is clinging to these old Bible poems. It is the wrong interpretation of them, possibly, by Himself

sometimes, that is driving Him to a religious rebellion.

The great church doctors might not like it, were they to hear it—this young carpenter with the soft words, and the radiance in His face, slipping back and forth from Galilee to the desert and from the desert to Galilee, proselyting the peasants, and telling them that God is not to be worshiped in the semi-heathen manner in which they are doing it at Jerusalem. Yet, no matter. What care the great religious doctors at the Sacred City? Who ever heard of this Galilean carpenter anyway, or of His reforms? Some day, and soon, they will hear of Him. They have already heard of John, but they are about to settle the score with John. His extremeness and his violence of speech have attracted the attention of the king of Galilee, and soon news will come that John's head on a platter has paid for the lascivious dancing of a girl at court. Some old writers say it was the king's own daughter who did the dancing that night in Antipater's palace by the Dead sea. Any-

way, the voice of him who called in the wilderness, is soon to be stilled forever.

No, the carpenter's name has not yet reached outside His Galilee. Aside from an occasional journey to Jerusalem when He was younger and His foot tramps to the solitude by the desert, there is little to tell that He has been outside the little province where He was born. His life in His home village, aside from His carpenter work, is that of a religious enthusiast. Some will call Him even a visionary. He has heard so much of a coming king and an overturning of everything in the world that He himself almost begins to look for something extraordinary. Why not? He is yet a Jew, and the teaching of the rabbis and of the Old Scriptures has been the coming of some kind of a king—a great Messiah, who, from out little Palestine, shall rule the world in an age of gold. The age, perhaps, is taking something out of the Bible that is not in it. Our own age has done that many times. Is it doing it to-day? Never in this world did imagination reach so high a pitch as it did

among the Jews in that wonderful time. Nothing was talked of or thought of, but the coming golden age and the new king, riding in a chariot of the clouds. It was not only a very expectant, superstitious age, it had been a troubled one. The world had been full of disorder, conflict. Everywhere had been war and tyranny. Especially, the whole Jewish race, the especial people of God, had known too often only of tyranny and sorrow. Even their own church, and church was the government with them, had drifted into a religious tyranny—the worst tyranny of all. It was, too, hemmed in by the awfullest form and ceremony. No one in this twentieth century who is not familiar with the Jewish Talmud and the earlier writings, can have the remotest conception of the thousand formalities, ceremonies, mummeries even, imposed upon the people of the church in the olden days. Later, ten volumes of the Talmud will be required to explain, to interpret, establish, and to write down the manner in which the commonest things of life might be done. The

great Sanhedrin, or Supreme Court and Senate of the Jews at Jerusalem, together with the scribes and priests about the temple, seemed banded together to make religion an awful, unbearable burden, and life a farce.

Though all Palestine was a Roman province the Romans interfered but little with this religious despotism. The Romans had enough wrongs of their own to inflict upon the people. The whole race of Jews in their home government had their own laws, their own Jewish customs, habits, and religion. The Romans simply made them subjects of Cæsar, and they rendered unto Cæsar only that which was Cæsar's, as this youth of Galilee, later, would suggest their doing.

The empire collected taxes, very heavy ones, from the people, and occasionally forced them into its armies. The Roman eagles and the Roman soldiers were familiar sights in every town and village of Palestine. The Romans usually had enough to do at home to disincline them from bothering themselves too much with

the religion of the Jews. Wars they had had everywhere. But just now, at the time of the Master's coming, there was a sort of peace in the world—a truce for breath, as it were. That is to say, the Roman empire that has its foot on almost the whole earth is resting a little. Rome's untold horrors, wars, corruptions, its licentiousness, its inhumanity to man, its blood and outrages have stopped their course at the eternal city for a little while. It is almost out of victims. Violence has ceased, only because violence has done its work.

The social conditions at Rome just before Augustus came to the throne were too terrible to be believed. That some of this outrage and terror had spread into the provinces of Palestine through governors and petty kings, appointed by, and tools of Rome, is only too well known. Herod himself was bloody enough to have served as an example for the worst the Roman empire, even, could endure. In Palestine, however, the great Jewish church served somewhat as a little hinder-

ing-wall to the element that had been almost crushing decent humanity out of the world.

All the states, like Palestine, bordering on the Mediterranean, says a distinguished historian, simply looked at one another—partakers of a common misfortune. They were tranquil, but it was the silence of despair. Man was not being considered as an individual by the Romans any more; he was only a "thing." Human suffering in the provinces counted for nothing, if only Rome had some political gain. If Palestine, or any other province, had some advantage by the presence of Roman legions, it was purely incidental, and scarcely intended. At this very moment Palestine is groaning under awful taxes paid to Rome, one-third of all produced, the writers say. No wonder the Jews were longing for the new time, the great time, the king, the Old Scriptures had told about. They are so afflicted, so depressed. The government of man had been a failure with them. Would not the day soon be at hand when God himself, through some

vicegerent, would come to the world and rule in pity? Then the wicked would no longer thrive, the just would live in delight, the very face of the world would be changed, all would be transformed into love and beauty, and Palestine would be the heart of the new world, and Jerusalem the capital of a perfected humanity. The Scriptures had said it. The prophets had said it.

Nursing these lovely and lofty expectations the Jews patiently waited, bearing with many wrongs. All classes shared alike in the great delusion, rich and poor, high and low, priest and peasant. That a mighty king on his chariot was coming in the clouds was the common belief. The too literal reading of the old-time prophets had led a whole race into a futile misconception. The world was *not* coming to an end at all. The Jews were a people easily mis-led. Their confidence in the supernatural was overwhelming. It was a quality inherited from their pagan ancestors. Their very neighbors were heathen and worshiped mystical gods.

Tens of thousands, mostly foreigners, had set up heathen temples and consulted heathen oracles right there in Galilee. Every time the young carpenter went to Jerusalem His eyes fell on some vast edifice dedicated to Jove or Juno, and strange gods were worshiped almost in the shadow of the great temple. This was not all. The very books read by the Jewish priests in the synagogue, or village churches, were filled with superstitious tales, with dreams and visions. In these books the people were told of times when angels walked upon the earth—they would walk again was the belief. The outcome of their wonderful superstitions, teachings, and their surroundings was an abject belief in marvels and impossibilities. If the most cultured and thinking persons lost their confidence in the marvelous, they kept it quiet. It was, besides, a day of jugglers, sleight of hand performers, and magicians. The peasants, mostly half-educated, could believe in anything. There was no knowledge of science available to show them the utter falsehood of

things their eyes seemed to behold. The commonest laws of nature were not understood. The priests themselves did not know that the world was round. The common people were sufficiently credulous to accept the most astounding things. In short, the astounding things were to them the natural things, the expected. No wonder they misunderstood the old prophets of the Bible, and the signs of the times. No wonder they were believing and alarmed when John, hurrying from the wilderness, shouted to them to be ready, to hurry to the Jordan river, confess, and be baptized.

CHAPTER IV

The Fairy Prince. His Home is everywhere. John the Baptist is preaching down by Jericho. The young Jesus hears of him and goes a hundred miles on foot to see him. A stranger steps down to the River to be baptized. Look quick, it is the Lamb of God! John is put to death in a palace by the Dead Sea. A Woman's Revenge.

The young carpenter in his pretty Galilean village was, in a way, a witness of these strange things. He heard in the synagogue the report that the world was coming to an end. He, too, had read the awful forebodings in the Old Scriptures. He may, too, have believed in the coming disaster, but it is not likely. Vaguely, He interpreted the Old Bible to mean something else. Between its lines He saw the shadow coming of a spiritual, not an earthly king. Who that king should be, He never dreamed. The voice of John He only heard in the distance—far down by Jericho, and amidst the desolation of the Dead Sea. The cry of the Baptist scarcely reached to remote little Galilee.

He had no dreams, this Galilean youth, no visions to tell Him of a glory coming to Himself. It is to be remarked even that visions and dreams never came to Him at all as they seem to have come to Daniel, to Buddha, to Confucius and to Mahomet. Neither by vision nor voice was He bidden to go to some great work. He was not clothed with infinite power at the time we are speaking of; He was simply a sweet and beautiful Galilean youth, with the grace of God upon Him.

In all Palestine now people were not agreed as to what the new kingdom that was coming to the world would be. Some looked for the earth suddenly to be crashed to pieces. Some looked simply for a renewal of the earth. Some said the righteous dead would come out of their graves and help govern. Some said all nature would be changed, and a wondrous king would come straight from Heaven. When the simple folks of Galilee talked to the Carpenter about it, He told them they were all mistaken. It was the "*Kingdom of Heaven*" that was com-

ing, he said—a revolution in human hearts, when mankind would be made better, and every one would do as he would be done by. It is doubtful if they understood Him. That, they felt, was not what the Scriptures had said; and doubtless many began to think the wonderful teacher wandering in His mind. Yet many believed on Him.

For a little while now He goes about His beautiful Galilee like a fairy prince, despite poverty and despite foes. He is so gentle, so kindly, so loving to the poor! He is the kind physician, the balm in Gilead. For a while He is met with hosannas; He has no riches, but every peasant's house is His welcome home. That transcendent smile, that low sweet voice, is His password to believing hearts. He must be the coming king, they think; still, they do not understand. He is so simple, so all-love. He tells them that they themselves are the kingdom; and again they do not understand. "Surely Thou art the Son of God," they cry, and the ground He walks on is sacred. Some

call Him the "Son of God." Yet not *once* did He call himself the "Son of God." It was the enthusiasts who called Him that. Often He referred to himself as the "Son of Man"; but, in his Syriac dialect, the word signified only man. After all it was only the village carpenter's son who was saying all these mysterious things!

In the days we are describing at Galilee just now, John the Baptist is still crying to the people of Jerusalem, and along the Jordan, to hurry to the river, to repent, and to be baptized. He has a school down there, and disciples of his own. They are greater extremists in their teaching than the quiet and lovable Galilean, who, till now, is hardly a public teacher at all. John is not only prophesying a speedy coming of a new king to the world, a Messiah, he is threatening an early destruction of almost everything, save the lives of the baptized and the repentant. He has alarmed all Palestine. A great moral and social earthquake is taking place. Nor is he backward about still condemning the king himself for his unlawful marriage.

The court is becoming disturbed, and the doors of Machero prison in a little while will open to the great prophet and preacher. The alarm among the people everywhere continues very great. Thousands confess their sins, enter the sacred river, are baptized, and now await the coming of the end of the world.

The young carpenter is just now in Galilee, perhaps for a little while only, back again from a long absence of solitude in the desert. Louder and louder, nearer and nearer, comes to the youth at Galilee that cry of John. Full of interest to see and hear the great reformer, He, and a few of His friends, start for the Jordan river. It is nearly a hundred miles away, to where John is, and they go on foot.

Let us also go to the Jordan for a little while. We turn our steps to Bethabara—a little village up the river from the Dead sea. We see a great crowd of excited people there. John himself is there. He is still telling them of the coming king, the Messiah of the world. But he does not dream from whence that king is to come—

from earth, or from Heaven. Shortly something tells John that a great person, unknown to him, is there in the crowd, and will ask to be baptized. John wonders who it can be. In a little while a stranger steps down to the river bank—goes to the water's edge and asks to be baptized. John does not know Him at first; but shortly a spirit voice whispers to him, "It is the man from Galilee." It is the Lord. Watch—and as He comes out of the river you will see the sign. The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove will rest upon Him! Overawed by the tremendous announcement, John at first feared to baptize. "Yes," said the Galilean, "let it be so," and it was done. As the stranger came up out of the water, John saw the dove, and, to the amazement of all, the Heavens opened, and a voice called, "This is my beloved son." The astonishment of the multitude can never be imagined.

After two thousand years, travelers cross the ocean simply to go and stand a moment in holy reverence at the spot where believers say God first spoke to

Christ on earth. John at once told some of his disciples to look—quick— "It is the Lamb of God." Two of these men followed the mysterious stranger, saying, "Master, where dwellest Thou?" He answered, "Come and see," and he took them with him for a day to His temporary lodging place in the village. One of them was Andrew, who breathlessly hurried to his brother Simon, and told him the great news. "We have found the Christ, Him of whom Moses wrote." Other friends quickly gathered in, and as one of them named Nathaniel approached, the Galilean, without knowing who it was, called him by his right name. A wonder had been performed. It was enough. "Thou art the Son of God," cried Nathaniel, and they would have worshiped Him then and there. "Thou shalt see yet greater things than these," said the Christ, for it was indeed He, and in a little time He slipped away to the desert as He had so often done before.

We will not follow Him there, though tradition tells strange and unexplainable

things as to how Satan tried to tempt Him, and how the temptation was resisted by the Galilean, though the nations of the world were offered Him.

After forty days He returned and went to His dear, sweet Galilee. We shall go along, for there are troublous times by Jerusalem and in Judea. In a little while, too, the king of Galilee has thrown John into a prison that belongs to his dominions down near the Dead Sea. John's religious, revolutionary, and semi-political preaching is at last too much for Herod Antipas. Possibly, it was while he was yet in the desert that the Master heard of the imprisonment of the prophet.

Very shortly a strange message came from John to the Man of Galilee. John has heard anew of the Master's triumphs, and two friends are sent to Him to ask if He is indeed the Christ—"or, do we look for another?" More proof, it seems, was wanted. John had seen the dove that day at the river, but John had never seen a miracle; and in that day wonders and miracles were the only accepted proof.

The answer comes back to the prison by the Dead Sea,—"Go and tell John the things which you do see and hear; tell him how the blind are made to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, even the dead raised to life, and the gospel preached to the poor." If John got the answer we do not know. It would be sad to reflect that John died without knowing that this young carpenter, whom he baptized that day in the Jordan, was the Messiah he had prophesied. When the two messengers left, it was then the Galilean turned to the listening crowd and said, "Among them that are born of women, there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist." How believing hearts must have swelled when He added, "He who is least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than John." The promise rings on these two thousand years, and will ring on forever.

Not long has the Galilean been in His home when news comes of the awful tragedy back there by the Dead Sea where John is.

On the high and desolate rocks close to

the Dead Sea there is a prison and a palace. Possibly there is not another citadel in the world built amidst such colossal, such difficult scenery. Dark, desolate mountains are all about it. It is reached through almost inaccessible valleys. Near it the angry Jordan, with a roar, tumbles into the Dead Sea and dies forever. The Dead Sea itself sleeps a thousand feet below—and beyond the hills, lies the burning desert. Altogether it is one of the most God-forsaken places in the world. Yet in the midst of this desolation an old king built the mighty fortress of "Machero." It was destroyed upon a time, and now Herod Antipas, the Galilean king, has restored it in tenfold splendor. In the center of it, and on its highest crest, he has built a gorgeous palace of Oriental beauty. Far down under the marble floors of the palace is a prison. Let us for a moment look down that prison corridor. In the farthest cell there is a familiar face. It is the face of John—John, who, only the other day we saw baptizing the Lord in the river Jordan. He, to whom thousands

flocked to be baptized and saved from the coming destruction, is himself in a felon's cell. One wonders at the daring of it. There are two reasons for it. One—he had railed too often against the people in power, and the hypocrisy of the times. In his zeal for truth, in his fearful warnings, in his tremendous language, it was honestly feared he might create a national disturbance. The poor, the uneducated, the superstitious, were massing themselves around him as if he were a god. King Antipas had gone to Rome upon a time, and, being enamored with his brother Philip's wife, ran away with her to Galilee. Her name was Herodias. John, bold in this as in all things, so old writers say, told the adulterous couple what he thought of them. He even told the king that he had poisoned his brother to get his widow. The king personally had liked John, and often listened to him gladly. He knew, too, that John was adored by the people, whose anger *he* had reason to fear. But Queen Herodias had other thoughts. John's accusations had insulted her. She

longed for some fierce revenge. The time has come. It is the birthday of the king, and, with Herodias, and an hundred courtiers, captains and generals, he has come to this grand palace and citadel of the mountains to celebrate it in an Oriental fashion. It is midnight in the palace, but the gorgeous chambers are ablaze with light. Music and laughter resound from the open windows, for it is a sultry night of June. Outside the castle, it is inky darkness. The mountains are tenfold desolate in their silence to-night—far below the Dead Sea sleeps in fearful midnight. East of the sea, and beyond the hills, is the scorched and sandy desert. It too sleeps—and is silent. Here and there a flash of far lightning crosses the horizon, betokening a desert storm. All is fearfully lonesome out there in the midnight of the mountains. How different all within! The gay scene grows gayer still —the bright lights grow brighter—the banqueters are glad with wine—a new flush is on every cheek, joy and revelry fill the whole palace. There seems nothing to

add to the appetite of pleasure. But wait —there is a dance—a beautiful young girl half-clad flies into the room; the music changes—and in a moment she is executing a sensuous dance of the Orientals. She is the daughter of the queen, and she is very beautiful. That she is not a professional dancer—just a beautiful girl—adds to the sensuous delight. Quickly the dance is done—and amidst the applause of all the court, and with flushed face, she passes before the king and bows. Drunken with wine and the banquet, the king seizes her hand and offers to reward her with whatever she may wish—if need be, with half his kingdom.

"What shall I ask of him?" she whispers to her mother. Herodias' chance had come. Revenge is sweet to evil people. In a moment she thinks of John. He is down there in the prison right below the banquet hall. He has heard all the night's revelry—he has seen from his cell window the dancing lights reflected against the gray, dark rocks outside. Yes, revenge is sweet. "Salome, daugh-

ter, tell him to kill John the Baptist for you—to bring his head up here on a platter." Heavens! was ever such a wish before! There is a little pause. Again the fair girl is before the king. She has said it. Unwillingly—but because of his word, and because of his nobles present—he grants the request. There is a low, sad whisper from the king to a soldier present, and in a few moments the cell door in the prison below opens. Murder is nothing to an Oriental king. The deed is done—and on a golden charger the bleeding head of one whom Jesus called the greatest human being in the world is carried into the room. Herodias has had her revenge. The curtain goes down on one of the awfullest scenes in human history.

CHAPTER V

An Oriental Wedding, and the first miracle. Jairus. "Little Maid, Arise." The Light of the World. The Poet of the Lord. Do we know what a Miracle is?

The blood of John probably strengthened the Master's spirit, for His immortal deeds now all at once became open and public. The day of his "miracles" had come.

Very soon now He was asked to a little wedding at the village of Cana. His mother also was there, and some of His brothers and sisters, and His disciples. It was to be a more joyful event than the awful thing He had heard of in the hills by the Dead Sea. The most famous marriage in all history was being celebrated. The Master's first miracle is to be witnessed. It is twilight of a delicious summer evening in Galilee. As was the custom among the Orientals, the bride has been carried in state to the groom's home. It is a bright and hilarious affair. All

the youths in the village are on horseback riding in the gay procession. There is music of drums and flutes, and song, and all the little street is ablaze with torches. In front of all, the bridesmaids come, laughing, and singing, and carrying flaming lamps. The bride, garlanded with roses, and covered with flowing veil that envelops her from head to foot, blushes at her own loveliness. Who that happy girl might be whose marriage story was to live a thousand years we will never know. Could she, as in a dream, have read the future, how extreme her happiness would have been. After two thousand years how glad we would be only to know her happy name. It is after dark; the stars are out on blue Galilee now. The scene has changed. The invited guests are now in the home of the happy groom. The governor of the feast, or the master of toasts, sits at the head of the banquet table. At a modest place near the center of the table sits the Nazarene carpenter. He is loved in Cana, as everywhere in Galilee, for His gentle kindness to the

poor. The story of what happened to this carpenter at the Jordan river has not reached Galilee—the greatness of the guest at their side is as yet unknown. But there is one present who knows mighty things. For thirty years Mary, the mother, has kept the secret told her by the Angel of the Annunciation. It is ten o'clock—the feast is almost over—the singing, the dancing, and the joyousness go on. Suddenly the girls waiting on the banqueters see the wine is done. What shall they do? One of them by accident, perhaps, mentions it to Mary. Suddenly her mind is filled with an ambitious, a glorious, thought. She glances toward the middle of the table where sits her son. The secret of thirty years is burning in her heart. As she, too, is waiting on the table, she walks to where her son is sitting and softly, confidently whispers, "They have no wine." His time has come. In a few words He tells her to have the girls fill all the six water jars close by with water—and Mary bids them do as He has said. "Then," said the Master, "bear it

to the governor of the feast." And when the man at the head of the table tasted it, behold the water had been turned to wine. It was the first miracle of the Master's life. Now He was consecrated indeed. His disciples saw what He had done, and for the first time fully believed on Him, and the fame of that great deed spread to many people.

He is no longer the simple village carpenter, He is now the Christ, and in a few days around and about the beautiful blue lake of Galilee, close by, He will be carrying the glad tidings to all the world.

It was soon after one of these meetings by the waters of Galilee that He performed another of the most beautiful and striking miracles of His life. Jairus, a rich man and a high elder in the Jewish church, came to Him at a feast given by Matthew and begged Him to come and heal his little daughter who was sick. If only He will lay His hands on her, she will be well. There was a little delay, for people crowded all about the Master as He started on the roadside, to hear him talk,

and praying to be healed. One poor sick woman secretly touched just the hem of His garment, her mighty faith telling her that even this little act could make her whole. Jesus turned to her, and simply said, "Daughter, go; thy faith hath saved thee."

The delay is awful for the agonized father, who knows not one moment is to be lost. Suddenly comes a messenger flying to him to tell him it is already too late —don't worry the Master—the little girl is dead. Instantly Jesus turned to the broken-hearted one and in deep compassion told him to have no fear—only believe. In a few minutes they are at the rabbi's home. The hired mourners and the flute players, as is the custom, are already there. They laughed at Him when He told them the little girl was not dead, but sleeping. Turning the crowd away, He took the little cold hand in His, and sweetly said, "Little maid, arise," and she arose and went about the house rejoicing. The miracle made a tremendous sensation, and multitudes were touched by it.

Now His home will be Capernaum, almost at the head of the dear lake. The little carpenter shop in the narrow street at Nazareth is closed forever; Joseph, the father, has passed away, and sleeps with the sons of David; Mary, the mother, lives in the town of Cana, where she first came from; the young carpenter with the soft speech, the tender eyes, the golden hair, and the radiance on His face goes up, and down through Galilee—and they call Him "The Light of the World."

Capernaum, with its houses of white marble, reflected in the blue waters of Galilee, was, in the Master's day, like Nazareth, one of the delightful spots of Palestine. All was fresh, green, and restful; and round about the land was called "The Garden of Abundance." And there too is the little plain so filled with green fields and flowers and running brooks that men likened it to "A pure emerald." It was in this little land of loveliness, surrounded by all that was enchanting in nature, that Jesus was to begin His public teaching. No wonder that He found in

beautiful nature a thousand indices to the majesty and goodness of the Creator. No wonder that His language was the language of poetry, and His similitudes the reflection of the fields and the flowers. He was in the land of idealism—of fancy—and He himself was the poet of the Lord. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow." "If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" " 'Tis your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." "We have piped to you, and ye have not danced."

The whole race of men there are idealists. There was not a better place than this Galilee in all the world for Christ to be born in. This is the spot of all the world for a new religion. These Galilean peasants are not reasoners, they are simply believers. They are the children of faith. Sad enough it is that the centuries of time, and the hands of war, changed all the beautiful scene. Even the climate lost its loveliness—there is almost

nothing left that is lovely in dear Galilee any more save its enchanting lake. All else is desolate now. The marble houses of Capernaum are now adobe huts, roofed in straw; the fields are bare and yellow; the trees are dead these thousand years. Nothing is green there any more. How changed from the perfect loveliness of that other time, when the Savior of mankind, amid the roses of Palestine, and the lilies by the sea, walked and talked and healed the poor.

It was as a healer of the body, not less than as a healer of the soul, that the miraculous carpenter now walked from village to village all over Galilee, followed sometimes by a handful of disciples, sometimes by a multitude of men, women, and children, though occasionally by hooting enemies. But what wonderful things he did—and how many poor he helped! The occasional miracles described in the Testament are probably not even a fraction of what He did. Why, the evangelist John says, he does not suppose the world would hold the books telling of all of them. Of

course, this is momentary hyperbole. The people of the East often exaggerate in telling of what they saw. They are the greatest tellers of beautiful stories in the world. But were these things miracles? The world goes on asking this question. Do we know what a miracle is? "A miracle is an impossibility," say the wise men of science. "No law of nature yet was ever set aside." Let us not forget, however, that the Galilean never claimed to set absolute law aside. By supreme faith in the Almighty, in Himself, He helped the law, instead of setting it aside.

A people, superstitious and ignorant of every scientific law, wondered to see Him do what He did. At that hour of His consecration, in the Jordan river, Providence gave Him a new birth; and in that birth, a strength to overcome men's minds—a strength to awaken dormant action in their bodies. Even the poor sick man He met at the roadside should be getting well, not dying—Nature intended it so—but pain and misfortune have cost him every resolution. The Christ came by, the sun-

light of His face, the blessing of His words fall upon him, and he smiles. "Help yourself," says the Master, "you can do it—only think so. Do you believe me?" "Yes," cries the weary one, "I believe, help thou my unbelief." The Master smiles and takes him by the hand. Instantly the encouraged mind acts on the half withered form. His blood starts, his nerves thrill,—the miracle is done.

No, we do not understand—not quite—neither do we understand how a drop of rain revives a blade of grass, nor how a night's dew wakens the roses to an untold beauty. Genius is born. The astronomer opens his book and without an effort understands the stars. The gift of stirring thoughts, of lifting human souls, is born. No being in the world had such anointing from above, such Godsent powers, as He who is just back from the Jordan. He believed in Himself, and that was half the battle—the other half had to be fought by the soul asking aid. One must believe. No faith, no miracle, is a principle. Not once did an unbeliever re-

ceive help from the Master. It was impossible. Impossible then as now. The strong faith of two beings is needed to produce a wonder. Only two or three times in His history did Jesus perform a miracle without some human being's faith—and those two or three wonders lack a perfect confirmation. It is not in question here whether God, who made every law of nature, could not suspend them every one if He wanted to. He would not be God, all powerful, if He could not. It is unimportant to us whether the Galilean did wonders by His supreme faith, His control over men's minds (a control given Him there at the Jordan river), or whether His Father in Heaven reached forth a hand each time and helped Him.

The peasants of Palestine knew little of any fixed law of nature. They did not ask as to that. Simply the doing of the unusual was enough for them. They demanded wonders—and healing of the sick by a word, or a touch of the hand, was a great wonder,—a miracle. He who could

simply influence mind was the Master. The Galilean was born anointed with the power. He knew it—and only asked others to believe. The people of that day asked for wonders. Mere assertions of truth were not enough. "Give us a clap of thunder, or shake the earth, if You would have us believe in You. Suddenly cure these sick, and we will know Your power." He did it, not for a show, but out of pity. And the healing made adorers for the truths He taught them. One thing is sure, He never doubted His own beliefs, His God-given powers. In the solitude of the desert He had reached definite conclusions. All His assertions were positive. If He said things in parables, it was because His hearers had no understanding of plain truth. We talk to children that way when we tell them stories. His wonders, or miracles, were for the same purpose.

CHAPTER VI

A wandering Teacher. Lives in a borrowed house at Capernaum. The Testament Books, fragments written from memory. The whole Law of Life boiled down to Seven Words. He visits Tyre by the Ocean. Walking on the Sea. A hard saying, and not understood. His friends begin to leave Him. They demand Wonders, Miracles. Raffael's great picture.

At this time the wonder-working carpenter had some dear friends in beautiful Capernaum by the lake. There were two fishermen there, brothers, Peter and Andrew. Peter was married and his wife and children joined the two brothers in the earnest welcome to the Master whenever He returned from His journeys among the lake villages.

How often He went to Jerusalem never will be surely known. Sometimes He returned to Peter's home right after a long rest in the solitude of the desert, bordering on the east side of the Lake. There was a Greek country there called Decapolis. Though also a province of Rome, it was an alliance of ten confederated

cities, and all worshiped the heathen gods. Over into this strange confederacy the Master also went sometimes, and the welcome His kindly message met was as warm as in Galilee itself. He also went over to Tyre and Sidon, by the Mediterranean sea, at times, and learned at first hand the workings of heathendom as practiced by a cultured people. On every hilltop, as He went and came, He saw temples to the gods of Greece or Rome. Here, as elsewhere, He was going and coming to preach to the poor. He was the poor man's Christ. He himself often had nothing. It has been said that it was only as a poor wandering teacher, possessed of nothing, not even a place to lay His head, that He went all about Galilee. In Capernaum He lived in a borrowed house, or from the hospitality of His two dear friends.

But right now, rich or poor, He is commencing the teachings and the wonders that are to make Him the loved and the hated of the world. To the believing He will show that He is not poor; in fact, that He has a friend ruling in the clouds

of Heaven. The disappointed ones, who, mistaking the signs, had looked for a real earthly king, persecuted Him at every roadside. The very orthodox Jews hated Him—called Him a Sabbath-breaker, a glutton among sinners, and a blasphemer of God. They seemed incapable of understanding anything He said. He talked by figures and parables—He told them stories—He talked of His father God—and His sonship—they would not see the spiritual sense in which He said all things. They put false words into His mouth, and then demanded He should prove them true. They listened only to deny, and to defame. Then again they demanded wonders, miracles—more wonders, more miracles. It was their only way of proving things. Had there been no wonders, no miracles, no seeming impossibilities performed, Christ would have had no followers in Palestine. Asserting things was not enough. "Prove to us that you are God by doing wonders." As He never had said that He was God He could not prove it. "I and my father are one," He told

them, but only in the sense that every Christian is one with the father. They could not, would not, see it, and at times would have stoned Him from their towns. In His meekness, His gentleness, He bore it all. Sometimes hundreds, thousands, would hear His words, see His miracles, and believe. Other thousands, though seeing, believed not. Some of His own nearest friends, not grasping His meaning, turned their backs and left Him.

Do not even to-day many feel that He should have spoken plainer, or, is it that our few fragmentary stories of His life are misconceived, confused, misinterpreted, mistranslated—and in a sense falsified by two thousand years of time and change of methods of human thought? No one knows. The Master did not speak the language of the Bible, not even the language of the Jews. His was a Syrian dialect called Arimean. It was the tongue His mother spoke; the same dialect they talked, and laughed and sang in, that night of the marriage in Cana. Let us not ask too much of the Testament.

Time and circumstances do strange things with human thought and speech. Despite mystery, and despite fragments, in the great story, enough is left clear to teach us the spirit of the Golden Rule. Christ said that was enough. The people who wrote the books of the Testament wrote wholly from memory, and some of them were now old men. John was ninety, and was then almost the last man on earth to have seen Jesus alive. Dates, deeds, times, places, words, are sometimes much confused in the Testament. Some things are omitted by one and told by another. Yet the spirit of each Testament book is the same—and all as authentic as writing from memory would permit. The Testament books are fragments only—yet piecing them together what a beautiful whole remains! Sometimes one wonders that just plain uncultured fishermen could write so beautifully. It would require a much larger book than this is intended to be to repeat all the tender stories, the touching words, of the Master that are portrayed by these inspired fishermen by the

sea. Even they did not tell all. In every village in Galilee, on all the winding roads, along the dear lake, in every hamlet, synagogue, the feet of the Master went. Every hour saw miracles of healing, and every poor peasant heard words of kindness. What delightful little journeys they were in the beautiful land as the Prince of Peace passed, scattering blessings. To the happy little communities it must have sometimes seemed as if the new kingdom, the promised hour, was there already! Such crowds pressed to Him that time and again He would climb into a little boat on Galilee lake, ask His friends to push it a little from the shore, and there, from this improvised altar on the sea, talk to the crowds on the shore.

And what did He say to the people standing on the shore? "They were only the needed things," said in a clear, simple, beautiful language. If He said them in parables often, it was because the people of His day understood things better said in that way. Things were made clearer, stronger, if illustrated in stories. The

great Lincoln understood the effectiveness of such an art, and pointed many a political moral by a human story. If, occasionally, the Master spoke in terms too mysterious to be comprehended by even His disciples, it was occasionally only. The needed things the common wayfarer could understand then, understands them to-day. He boiled down the whole duty of life into seven words, "Do as you would be done by." This, He said, was all there is to religion. How simple, how just, how necessary, if we hope for happiness even in our every-day life.

Once at the dawn of a beautiful summer morning in Galilee, the Master stood on the edge of a mountain and chose twelve disciples to help Him teach, and to the whole world delivered the wonderful message known as "The Sermon on the Mount." Lovelier words were never spoken—so simple, so true, so direct, so sustaining to human hearts, that they were to reach through all times and to all men. It ended with the great promise that "unto him who sought God's kingdom all

things should be added." The promise of that morning in Galilee sustains mankind forever.

Once He went over to the little city of Tyre by the Mediterranean, perhaps to teach some there. Possibly it was the only time the Master ever beheld the ocean. Tyre, with its minarets, its monuments, its temples, its white sails on the sea, was a heathen city. One can fancy how profoundly stirred a soul like His, steeped in a love of nature, must have been at the first sight of the ocean. There were the white ships going to every known land of the earth—there was a new and picturesque people; there was heathendom, in luxurious idolatry. The little journey served Him as material for many a reflection later in His Galilean home.

His name was not wholly strange in the beautiful heathen city by the sea—for it is told how a woman, a Greek, met Him, threw herself at His feet, and beseeched Him to heal her daughter. The persistence, the faith of this heathen woman, that He could do it, even without seeing the

afflicted daughter, led to a miracle. As in almost all His life the miracle came only after the absolute show of faith on the part of the one asking. No faith, no miracle, was a constant teaching.

Only a little time there by the blue sea now, and He is soon off for a three days' stay in that heathen land—the desert cities beyond the Jordan. Heathen as they are there, they follow in multitudes and are astounded at His wonders, for He heals many of the sick.

There, too, almost on the edge of His own country, He feeds another multitude. It is the five thousand people who have followed Him to a lonesome place in the country. They are filled, and they glorify His name. As darkness comes on the vast crowd that He has fed goes home rejoicing—while the disciples enter a boat, and, despite a coming storm on the lake of Galilee, start to the other side. Jesus Himself goes up on a lonesome mountain to pray. The night is utterly dark on the sea, and the wind howls around the foot of the mountain and over the tempest-

tossed waters. Naturally, the disciples and the boatmen are alarmed. Their boat is about going down—the wind is more threatening—midnight is on the sea. Once there is a little rift in the clouds, and the half-light of a summer moon falls over them; the sailors glance out onto the waves and behold the form of a man walking toward them on the billows. It is a spirit. The phantom—as phantom it surely is—fills them with alarm, but a voice cries out, "Be not afraid, it is I." It is said, Peter seeing some one walking on the water tried it himself, and would have drowned had not the strange spirit taken him by the hand. Then the phantom itself got into the boat—the winds at once went down—and, as the little ship touched the shore, the amazed disciples discover the night phantom to be the Lord Himself.

The weird story instantly is sent to all the neighboring villages, and again people come in multitudes, some to be healed, some to revile. They were willing enough to be healed, everybody, yet the unbeliev-

ing also were there in crowds, and, strangely enough, despite wonders, miracles, and healing, a storm of opposition grows. His Galileans themselves even are joining His opponents. It is all unexplainable.

To us of the twentieth century it would seem that seeing the miracles He did, and hearing the Heavenly teaching that fell from His lips, the whole world would have fallen down and worshiped. Perhaps He said too many things that they could not understand.

He went up to Capernaum that morning for a little bit, and talked to the people in the village synagogue. "I am the Bread of Life," he said, "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." This was too much for their small understandings —not a soul knew what He meant. "This is a very hard saying," His hearers answered. They puzzled their brains over it a little; loss of faith was seizing on them. Some of them commenced leaving Him. Then He said something harder

still, "If this about the flesh and blood startles you, what would you say to see me ascending up where I was?" Now, still, the mystery had deepened; more people left Him. In a tone of overwhelming sadness He asked His twelve apostles "if they too would leave Him"? The storm of hatred was breaking everywhere. Enemies surrounded Him; only a few seemed absolutely faithful. The rabbis, the scribes, and the big doctrinaires at Jerusalem had their spies everywhere, watching for His smallest word to ensnare Him. They surely, earnestly, believed Him a foe to all their Jewish church. He was teaching people to despise their great prophet, Moses, and to follow the vagaries of a new, unheard of religion. He was to them worse than the heathens across the border.

What a change it all was! Even here in His own beautiful Capernaum they began to deny Him. Pharisees, Sadducees, and every conceivable enemy of the new faith are concentrating in crowds to traduce Him. Once more they demand a sign

from Heaven—again, a clap of thunder, a sudden earthquake, or something, if He wants to prove that He is really the Christ. To their insolent demands He naturally makes no reply. Then more than ever conspiracy to destroy Him is rapidly being set on foot everywhere. Shortly He will leave this people by Galilee and their hypocrisies and falseness forever. Of course, His immediate friends all around Lake Galilee and His disciples are mostly sticking to Him, but not all of them—many have gone back on Him.

One day walking on a country road He asked His disciples who the people really said He was? They answered that some thought Him one of the old prophets, risen from the dead.

Herod up at Jerusalem believed Him to be John the Baptist, whom he had murdered to please a dancing girl that night in the castle by the Dead Sea. Herod was much alarmed about it all, too. "But who do you say that I am?" the Master asked again—and Peter said, "Thou art the Christ." "Tell no one this," continued

Jesus, and then He explained to them privately His coming sufferings and death. They were all astounded. But these sufferings simply "had to be"; likewise His death. It seemed impossible.

He spoke to them then about life's duties, the futility of riches, of earthly success, and added, "What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" There was much thinking now, but still little believing. In less than a week He took three of His disciples on to a high mountain to pray, and, while there before them, He was transfigured for a little while. "And the fashion of his countenance altered, and his raiment was white and glistening." Not only that—two angels, or spirits, appeared in glory with Him and talked about the death that was to come to Him at Jerusalem. Shortly, as the Master and His disciples went down the mountain side, they met a crowd gesticulating and shouting over an epileptic boy led by his agonized father. Some of the Apostles had tried to cure this boy and failed. The father prayed to

Christ for compassion. "If thou only canst believe," answered Christ, "all things are possible." Weeping, the father said, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief"—and the boy at once was healed. The scene on the mountain and the story gave rise to that greatest picture in the world, Raffael's painting of the "Transfiguration." It is in the Vatican at Rome.

CHAPTER VII

Jesus goes alone and on foot to Jerusalem, to try and prove Himself. In six months they will kill Him. The rich Capital no place for Socialism. "If thou be Christ, tell us, plainly." He is a fugitive from a city mob. The Raising of Lazarus. Again the people are following Him. The great Sanhedrin is alarmed. "This Man has everybody believing on Him! He will create a Revolution yet." Jerusalem is in political danger, anyway; so is the Roman Empire. Everything seems going to pieces. "This Man has too many Followers; we must kill Him." Judas is hired to betray Him.

THERE is but a little stay in Capernaum now, the great Galilean will scarcely walk by His beautiful lake again. He is now thirty-two years old and more.

In a few days His disciples will have gone up to Jerusalem to the great festival, the feast of the tabernacle. It is said that some of the nearest relatives of the Galilean did not believe in Him even now. It was they, however, who told Him to go up to Jerusalem to the headquarters of the opposition and "prove himself," if He could. "Show Thyself to the world,"

they said, "these things are not done in secret." And so He went alone and on foot.

Six months—and it will be the end. They will kill Him. His meditation on that lonesome foot journey to Jerusalem, with death and the cross as its last goal, we will never know.

The great Jerusalem is full of strangers. Tens of thousands are now beginning to hear of the great Galilean for the first time. There is great excitement in the city. Most of the newcomers take time to talk of Him. He is on every tongue. "When does He come, and from whence?" "Galilee?" "No good can come from there; that is sure." "Where is He now?" "Why do the people shout?" "What does He look like?" "Will He be welcomed or stoned?"

Suddenly the sweet face of the Master himself is on the temple porch in Jerusalem. Look, He is teaching the people. How strange, how embarrassing the situation. Save for a little coming of believers and friends, men and women who have

come to Him from Galilee, He is almost without a friend in all that splendid city. If many souls, hearing, believe in Him, it is dangerous to say so. All such will be turned out of the synagogue, their houses and their lands taken from them. Anyway this great, unbelieving city is not the place to preach humility in, nor love for the lowly, nor the giving away of property, nor for the reproaching of the rich. That is a kind of socialism usually wanted by people who have nothing. This splendid city, with its minarets and domes, its gorgeous temple, and the magnificent structures built by Roman emperors, is full of rich people, full of aristocrats; and is governed by proud priests, who look upon the Galilean reformer and His small following with utter contempt.

One day when He was walking on Solomon's porch of the temple, numbers of Jews came around Him and tauntingly said, "How long dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." He answered, "I have already told you, and ye believed not." "The

works I do in my Father's name bear witness of me." Then He happened to say something very mysterious. "I and my Father are one." That was too much for them. Not knowing what it meant, they tried to stone Him out of the city. "I have done many good works," He continued, "for which of those works do you stone me?" "We stone you for blasphemy," they cried, "and because being a man Thou makest Thyself God." He had to fly. Another bitter charge against Him had been His healing the sick on Sunday. Not even a good deed dare be done on the Sabbath, was a doctrine of these extreme interpreters of the Mosaic law. Once the Lord restored a blind man to sight on a Sunday, and the poor man was almost mobbed because of it.

The wrangling of the scribes and doctors about Him still goes on. There is not a moment of peace for Him. He is even in constant danger.

On a slope of the Mount of Olives, where He often sits summer evenings looking down to the city at His feet and lamenting

over it, stands the little hamlet of Bethany. Three good friends of his live there. Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus. Many a time after tiresome disputes and wranglings with insolent priests and rabbis in the city, who were only trying to entrap Him, He goes to this quiet little home among the olive groves for rest.

After a while He leaves the neighborhood of the great city entirely, and goes over the Jordan near the desert, to the very spot in fact where John baptized Him two years ago. What strange feelings must have possessed His soul while there —there where the dove had come down on Him, and where the great voice had called Him "the beloved Son"! There His public life commenced. And now He is there again. Not with the voice of God speaking to Him.—No—He is a fugitive from a city mob. Yet a great many people from the villages come to Him down there by the Jordan and believe on Him. Many wonders are again performed. Many people are healed. A part of this rest-

ful time away from Jerusalem is spent close to Jericho. A lovely plain is there with delightful plantations and gardens of perfume. "It is a divine country there," said Josephus, the historian, but in those days it was all fresh and green—the climate different from now. Lover of beautiful nature as He was, this little spot of roses and verdure must have delighted His soul.

In a few days His dear friends Mary and Martha, back there in Bethany, send to tell Him that their brother Lazarus, who is very dear to Him, is sick.

"Let us go back there at once," exclaimed the Master. His disciples tried to warn Him. "Why,—they stoned you and you had to fly just now,—will you risk going back?" He reflected a moment in silence, and then told them, sadly, plainly, that Lazarus was dead. "Let us go." And some of the disciples said, "Let us also go that we may die with Him."

It is only some twenty-five miles perhaps, and they have come near to the village. It seems the friend had been dead

four days already. But the coming back is to be followed by one of the astonishing wonders of Bible history. Lazarus is to be brought to life. The names of Lazarus, with Mary and Martha, had been well known in Jerusalem, and numbers of its good citizens had come out to the village to condole with the bereaved sisters. Hearing of the Master's approach, Martha hurried out to the edge of the village and met Him at the door of her dead brother's tomb, a place cut in the solid rock. "If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died," cried the sister, weeping. "He will rise again," the Master answered, simply. "Yes, I know, at the resurrection," said Martha. Again he spoke. "I am the Resurrection, whosoever believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? Hast thou faith?" And she answered, "Yes." Instantly she ran and told her sister, and she, too, came, believing and worshiping. "Did I not tell thee," said the Master, "that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" Then He commanded

the door of the tomb to be taken away—and, in a loud voice, bade the dead to rise.

In a moment the living Lazarus walked out of the tomb. Some of the Jews, seeing it, believed. Some of the higher classes also believed. However it was done, it had been an astounding wonder, and the excitement ran like wildfire into the city. The great Sanhedrin and chief priests, hearing of it, instantly called a secret council.

"What shall we do?" they said. "This man doeth many miracles. If let alone, all men will believe on him—and the Romans will come and take our place and nation away from us." There was an ex-high priest named Annas at this secret meeting. He was a religious tyrant, who had never lost his power in the Jewish councils. His son-in-law, Caiaphas, was officially high priest, but only as his tool. Annas was the power behind the throne. His wishes, his commands, prevailed everywhere. The murderous strings were pulled by his hands. Annas hated Jesus, hated the apostles, hated every new doc-

trine; and possibly, too, he truly feared that any new religion or excitement might disturb Jewish politics, might bring on rebellion, might even bring the hatred of Rome on the Jews. He did not know that the hatred of Rome was already turned against Palestine; nor that Palestine, Jerusalem, Rome itself, were all at that moment on the road to destruction, but it is from causes with which the teaching of the Galilean, whom he is about to murder, has nothing to do. "It is better to kill this religious fanatic and disturber and save ourselves," said Annas to the great council. "We will not do it with our own hands—we will arrest Him, bring Him before the judges, and incite the mob to do the rest."

And so an order was sent out that the kind Jesus should be arrested wherever found. The miracle at the tomb, however performed, or however believed, had proved to be the most important act of the Galilean's life. Now it was, alas, to be a warrant for His death. "Now," said the Sanhedrin council, "it is going too far—

all the world is running after Him."

In perhaps a week after this there was a little supper at Martha's home, in Bethany, only two miles out of the city—and the Master was there, and the resurrected Lazarus sat at the table with them. Singularly enough Judas, the coming traitor, was also there, and complained of Mary's using some precious ointment to bathe the feet of the Master. Because he was treasurer for the apostles and a thief, he wanted the money value of the ointment put where he could steal it. He was now already preparing himself for the great betrayal.

Out of curiosity to see Lazarus, the resurrected one, many went to the village that night from Jerusalem; some of them also were converted. The priests, hearing of this, decided it was best to put Lazarus also to death. The great wonder performed at the tomb had alarmed them. It had not converted them.

In a few hours, believing people, hearing that the great Galilean was entering the city again, went out to meet him,

swinging palm leaves and shouting hosannas. Many even threw their mantles down for Him to ride over and hailed Him king of Israel. Some of the bystanders, looking on with contempt, even asked Jesus to silence and rebuke His zealous followers. "No, no," He answered, "were these to hold their peace, the very stones would cry out." Again all kinds of snares are set for Him, every word is watched. Though He is again permitted to talk at the porch of the temple every day, spies are there listening. He is hated in the great city.

Pretty soon they will call Him a criminal for doing cures on the Sabbath, for with their laws one scarcely dared eat his dinner on a Sunday; not this only, they will persecute Him for saying He is a king when there is no king, save Tiberius at Rome. Sometimes the Galilean's own talk seems wilder, less comprehensible than it even was to His native villagers. He has himself become so wholly spiritual, so filled with a quick coming of the new

kingdom, that He hardly realizes the material life about Him.

Occasionally He climbs up to the top of the Mount of Olives, overlooking the beautiful city, and sits there for hours, meditating on its spiritual destruction—a destruction He had come to prevent, and cannot. Even a material destruction is hanging over Jerusalem. In thirty-seven years it will be burned to the earth—and where the gorgeous temple stands, the mosque of Omar will one day lift its head, type and temple of Mahomet, whose creed would have broken the Master's heart. It seems the Master in His soul knew all that was about to happen. Could He not have prevented it? By a miracle could He not have destroyed all His enemies at a single blow? He did not do it. He only said, "It is the father's will, these awful things that are about to happen." He would not shirk them. He regarded Himself foreordained to suffer. To His mind the Old Scriptures foretold His awful sacrifice.

CHAPTER VIII

The last supper. Leonardo's great picture. Betrayal. With a rope around his neck, the Savior of mankind is dragged before a Roman Judge. The scene at Pilate's palace. Pilate's wife warns him. The awful murder and the End.

One evening He and His disciples sat together at their evening meal—it was to be their last on earth. It is doubtful if the disciples really believed all was to be finished so soon. Yet He had most earnestly told them of His coming death. It was now, in the Passover week—and the Master and His nearest ones proposed celebrating one of its festivals in private and alone. "But where?" asked his disciples. "Well," He had said, "go into Jerusalem, and the first man you meet carrying a pitcher of water, follow him to the house where he goes; there tell the owner I am coming, and he will show you an upper room, all prepared for us."

Two of them went as told, followed the man with the pitcher, and found all in readiness for the little supper. That evening the Master and His disciples took a walk together from little Bethany, over the Mount of Olives, to Jerusalem. It was their last walk together on earth. At this supper where they now are, the Galilean once more tells His disciples the fate awaiting Him. He even points out the betrayer; but they do not seem to know His meaning.

Quietly, and aside, He whispers to Judas to "Do that which you are going to do quickly." It seems that Judas at once slipped away from the eleven and went out to hunt up the enemies of one he called Master. For a trifling sum of silver he had sold his own soul.

This scene, like that of the Transfiguration, has been celebrated by one of the great pictures of the world. Leonardo da Vinci's picture of the "Last Supper," in an old church at Milan, Italy, is in itself a miracle of art. Perhaps no painting on earth has attracted so many believing pil-

grims to see and to sigh over the sorrow of the Master.

That very night when the moon rose over the towers and walls of the city, Jesus and His disciples left the supper room and secretly went out across the little brook Cedron and entered an olive orchard, to-day known as the Garden of Gethsemane. It is close to the city walls. There in the moonlight the disciples, tired and afraid, and probably hiding from their enemies, lay down on the grass and slept. The Master Himself stepped a little into the shade of the olive trees to pray. He knew the hour had come.

In a little while, it was the midnight hour now, he heard men coming, with stones and swords and lanterns. Fearlessly He stepped out into the light of the full moon and asked them whom they were looking for. They answered, "Jesus, of Nazareth." He said quietly, "I am He." At the same moment Judas, the betrayer, walked up and kissed Him. This had been a sign agreed upon between Judas and the priests, as to which one to capture.

The little handful of friends with the Lord now tried to give battle, but He would not permit them. He was at once bound, and carried back into the city. It is past midnight. He is first conducted before Annas, the church tyrant, who sends Him to Caiaphas, the high priest. There He is questioned and tortured. By the time it is daylight He is sent to the judgment hall of Pilate and accused. Pilate is a Roman. Under the Roman law there still must be some pretense of a charge against a human being before he can be put to death—some charge of wrong.

It is now seven in the morning. Priests, scribes, Pharisees, all come before Pilate in a howling mob, leading the Savior of mankind with a rope around His neck. They had tortured Him half the night—they have decided He shall die; they only want permission to kill Him, or have Him killed by Pilate.

As it is the holy festival time, custom does not permit the mob to enter the heathen palace of Pilate. So they stand

out in the street, on a place called the "pavement," and howl.

"What is the charge against Him? What has this man done?" demands the Roman governor, with a show of justice as he steps out to the front of his palace and looks at the mob. "He says he is Christ, the King," some of the accusers answer. Pilate goes back into the great hall, with the marble floor and the gilded ceilings. He himself has no love for the Jews. They have no love for Pilate. He knows the Jerusalemites to be a seditious lot of zealots, quarreling forever among themselves, and fanatical in their adherence to the laws of Moses. The Jews know Pilate to be a hater of their creeds and customs. They regard him, too, a brutal governor; but now they would use this brutality against one of whom they were a little afraid, for in the villages this Galilean, whom they were persecuting, had many friends. Would not the people rise, moved by His wonderful miracles, and at last put an end to all their religious pretenses? It was the temple-people, the

Sanhedrins, and the Pharisaic priests who stood in front of this mob, gathered at Pilate's palace on that early morning. They had already decided their victim must die, and they were inciting all the ignorant to violence.

Because of the Roman occupation, Pilate's approval was a necessity before they could quite kill a man. They reckoned, however, that he would want to please them some, and so lessen his own unpopularity.

In a little time the governor called Jesus into the judgment hall. Looking at the wronged, the suffering, the persecuted being who stood before him, the blood falling from His poor body to the floor Pilate asked Him plainly if He were the king of the Jews? "Do you ask that of yourself," said the persecuted but heroic prisoner, "or did others tell it of me?"

Pilate was in fact greatly impressed by the face, serene, even in suffering, and the mild words of one falsely accused. The Savior explained that if He was a king it was not of this world. His kingdom was

of the spirit. Pilate did not quite understand that. He himself was not very spiritual. Jesus added, "I am a witness to the Truth." "Then what is Truth?" said Pilate. We can only guess the answer given him. It may have greatly moved the Roman, for he at once went out to the mob assembled on the pavement and said, "I find no fault in this man." Some one in the crowd spoke up and accused Jesus of stirring up the peasants in Galilee.

"If he is a Galilean," said Pilate to himself, "he must be tried by Antipas, the Galilean governor." Reliable tradition says that they also shouted at him that this was the very Child Jesus, whom Herod tried to kill when he massacred the children of Bethlehem. Pilate had never heard of the flight to Egypt nor of the return. He supposed the Child Christ dead. Now he is astounded, and alarmed, for where had Jesus been all these years? Had His origin, His indentity been kept a secret? Does not this tradition and Pilate's alarm add strength to the sup-

position that years of His life had passed in the secret of the desert?

Pilate gladly sent him to Antipas, who that very day happened to be in Jerusalem at the festival. The Galilean ruler had heard of Christ a thousand times, and often had longed to see him and talk with him, but most he was curious to see a miracle performed. Again the Master is accused, but to the many questions of Antipater He makes no answer whatever. Neither does He perform some miracle for the curiosity and sport of the Galilean court. Offended at His silence, and greatly disappointed, the king mocks Him, and arraying Him in ridiculous garments sends Him back to Pilate. But he has found no fault in Him—no act against the laws of Galilee for which he dare punish Him.

Again He is before Pilate, the Roman, again full of pain, and bleeding, He answers mildly as before, or else is silent, submitting to outrageous injury. Three times Pilate goes out before the crowd and tells them that Christ has done

nothing worthy of death. "Again I tell you I find no fault in Him. I sent Him over to Antipas, the king of Galilee. He also finds no fault worthy of death. Let me chastise Him and set Him free."

But the crowd yelled the louder for His blood. Once the wife of Pilate comes and whispers to him to "have nothing to do with that good man, I have been forewarned in a dream." Again Pilate earnestly strives to save Him. Again he addresses the mob, "You know it is our custom to release a prisoner at this festival. I have Barabbas, the robber, here and Jesus. Let me set Jesus free and hang the robber." "No, no," cry a hundred voices; "free Barabbas and crucify the heretic." The Roman, accomplished in killing men, practiced in cruelty as he is, shudders at the fearful injustice. He knows the Galilean has done no wrong. The bruised and bleeding body of the Master waits in silence and prayer there in the hall of the palace. The cries for His murder reach His ears—they grow

louder and louder. Pilate, confused as to the law, as to his duty, and perhaps alarmed, weakened, in a contemptible moment of cowardice, yields.

But first he steps to the front, and in a loud voice exclaims, "Look you, I wash my hands of the blood of this good man." He could no nothing more.

In a moment the robber is set free, and the Christ, followed by a multitude, some deriding and some weeping for pity, starts for the awful place of execution. Once as He goes along the thorny way, He hears pitying women bewailing and weeping. Turning His face to them, He cries, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me; but weep for yourselves and your children."

That weeping, that sorrow, has continued two thousand years. Humanity will weep forever over the awfulness of what happened. It is hard to think that God ordained any of this suffering of Jesus. More likely the Master, in the extremity of His zeal for humanity, believed His very blood on the cross a needed sacri-

fice to awaken the world. He was human. His road from Pilate's palace to the cross has been followed in tears by millions of people. The awful picture of what happened there is too dreadful to describe. John, the Evangelist, himself was present —the only eye witness who has written of it, yet not even he has the courage to tell the story beyond a dozen verses in the Testament. The disciples had deserted the Lord, and were in hiding. They were in fear. They could not drink the cup the Master had to drink. A few women, including the mother of the Redeemer and her sister, were present to the very end. To make the anguish as disgracful as possible, the Master was nailed to a cross between two thieves. It was the most agonizing kind of execution known to the cruel Roman law. Some Roman soldiers put Him to death, as ordered by their governor, but the blood of it all was on the hands of fanatics and priests.

Pilate, in mockery of the Jews, whom he despised for this murder, forced on him, put an inscription over the cross saying,

"The King of the Jews." The mob of murderers wanted him to amend the phrase, and have it read, "He said He was King of the Jews." Pilate declined, for Jesus had never said that. Besides, Pilate had had enough of the horror that, like an earthquake, was to shock the world. He had washed his hands of it.

The deed done, the anguish over, Joseph, a secret Christian convert, though a rich member of the Sanhedrin, asked Pilate for the body of Jesus, and put it in a new tomb of his own, hewn in the solid rock, as was a custom of the land.

On what is now known as Easter morning, just as the dawn was breaking over the hills of Jerusalem, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb of the dead Master. It had been opened by angels, as she believed, for, on looking within, she saw two figures sitting there dressed in white. Very quickly two of the disciples, whom Mary saw and told, came and looked into the cave also and saw nothing but the linen clothes of the Master, and went away. The body was not there. Mary

waited a little yet by herself, when one of the angels asked her why she was weeping. She answered, "They have taken away my Lord." At that moment she turned her face a little and saw a spirit standing by her. Thinking at first it was the gardener, she asked it where the body had been taken to. To her amazement the spirit spoke and sadly said, "Mary." Instantly she knew it was the Lord. She would have thrown herself at His feet, but He bade her not to touch Him, but rather to hasten to the disciples and tell them He was about to ascend to Heaven.

That day, on a country road, outside Jerusalem, He overtook two of His disciples, and walked and talked with them all the way to Emmaus, telling them the great story of the Scriptures, while they walked and wondered, not knowing it was the spirit of the dead Master. That same evening, too, that same Spirit of Jesus appeared to the disciples in a closed room where they were hiding for fear of the Jews. In a little while the word went round among the followers that the Lord

was risen. For forty days that Spirit, risen from the tomb, was to be seen by the faithful in Jerusalem and in Galilee.

To His apostles His appearance in the spirit could not have been surprising, for He had repeatedly told them that He would be crucified, and would rise again in three days. As to a possibility of life after death—there was little or no question among the Jews. The Sadducees only argued against it. The belief of that time and of ages before was in a resurrection. Even Daniel had told the people distinctly that the time would come "when many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and contempt."

Indeed, Jews at this very moment were expecting Elias and other prophets to rise from their graves and rule the world from Palestine.

Whether Christ's physical body also appeared to Mary Magdalene that morning in the garden we may never know. Lyman Abbott has rightly said that it is "not even important that we should

know." It is sufficient that the Spirit that never dies was there. His appearance was the perfect proof of an after life. Pilate and the murderers had killed only the body, not the soul.

Quite possibly spirits have been momentarily seen in our later times, but His, seen by thousands, walked about the earth for forty days.

That event was to establish a religion that would reform the world and live forever. The world now knew there was a second life to strive for—and the road to that life was in being good to one another. Millions have walked it, and died in peace. They died, not to an eternal sleep but to waken with the light of Heaven bursting around them.

THE END

232.9R
B9917

Byers, S. H. M.

A layman's life of Jesus.

1912
Dec 17 Roswell Dec 19

232.9R
B9917